RULES FOR WRITING AND RANKING RESONANCE STRUCTURES

A resonance structure is acceptable if:

- It is a meaningful Lewis structure (Please refer to rules for writing Lewis structures!)
- Electrons are moved but the skeleton of the molecule is retained

A resonance structure has a greater importance if:

1. It contains a greater number of bonds and atom octets
2. It has minimum charge separation, i.e. fewer non-zero formal charges
3. The negative charge resides on a more electronegative atom
4. No like charges are located on adjacent atoms

The criteria for ranking above are in order of importance (i.e. (1) is most important).